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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [GG](#) [IR](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH SECURITY COUNCIL
SECRETARY PATRUSHEV: WE NEED TO REBUILD TRUST

Classified By: Ambassador John R. Beyrle. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary. Russian Security Council Secretary and former head of the Federal Security Service (FSB) Nikolay Patrushev told Ambassador October 29 that the U.S. and Russia need to rebuild trust and confidence. Citing past examples of U.S.-Russian counterterrorism (CT) cooperation, he contended that, had the U.S. and Russia shared information "as we used to," we might have been able to avoid the war in Georgia. He claimed that "at the highest levels," the GOR had told the U.S. that Russian forces would not move on Tbilisi. Russian forces had orders only to destroy Georgian military installations that threatened Russian troops. He reiterated Russia's insistence that Georgia should not be rearmed, claiming Georgia had received money from the U.S. and military equipment from other countries. Noting that the U.S. and Russia still had good CT cooperation and faced common threats, Patrushev asked for additional information on the U.S. strikes in Syria October 28. While Russia was concerned about the level of violence in the north Caucasus, Patrushev claimed it was lower than in the past and more crime-related due to lack of social and economic development, rather than terrorism. Russia had taken steps to significantly tighten its border, and there were now only "three-four representatives" of international terrorist organizations in the region, compared to about 30 in the late 1990's. In Chechnya, the situation was "radically changed," because of the Kremlin's personal attention to the issue. Russia was prepared to cooperate with the U.S. on all issues, including Iran, but we needed to keep each other informed. End summary.

"We Need to Rebuild Trust and Confidence"

12. (C) Patrushev told the Ambassador October 29 that both countries could reap mutual benefits of cooperation and avoid "unpredictable situations" if we were willing to put aside our mistrust and overcome the lack of confidence between us. He pointed to past U.S.-Russian counterterrorism cooperation, such as the case of the UK citizen who had tried to acquire MANPADS from the CIS and smuggle them into the U.S. to use against civilian aircraft. Through cooperation between Russian, U.S. and UK agencies, we were able to discover and thwart the plot. Similarly, Patrushev said, when the U.S. was considering invading Iraq, the President had called Putin, who had told him Russia would not stand in America's way, but sought to dissuade the U.S. action. Pointing to Russia's project on a multinational terrorism database, Patrushev said the more open we are with each other, the better. In that vein, he asked for more specific information on the U.S. airstrikes October 28 in Syria, particularly which al-Qaeda leader was killed.

13. (C) Cold War legacies, such as the Jackson-Vanik amendment, hurt the relationship, Patrushev said, pointing out that Russia now has a visa-free regime with Israel. He stressed that Russia wanted to have good relations with the U.S. The Ambassador agreed that the original purpose of the Jackson-Vanik amendment no longer existed, and there were areas where it was in both our interests to cooperate. But there were still many in the Russian press and influential circles who seemed to believe the U.S. was trying to instigate a color revolution in Russia, and this undermined our abilities to establish better trust and confidence.

Georgia

14. (C) Patrushev contended that if the U.S. and Russia had shared information prior to the outbreak of hostilities in Georgia, the war might have been prevented. Moscow had been conducting negotiations with Tbilisi on a non-use of force agreement (NUF), but suddenly, without explanation, Georgia had broken off the talks. Russian analysts had pointed to the fact that Secretary Rice had visited Tbilisi just before Georgia had suspended the negotiations and concluded that Saakashvili had "received orders from the Secretary to stop the talks." He said Russia had heard that the U.S. had told Saakashvili not to start a war, but did this mean that the U.S. knew beforehand that he was planning to do so? If so, the U.S. should have shared such information with Russia, and worked together to prevent the conflict from occurring. Moscow had told the U.S. "at the highest levels" that Russian

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troops would not take Tbilisi, Patrushev said, and had explained the limits to which the troops would go. Russian forces had had orders to destroy only those Georgian military installations which threatened the Russian army, he said. "We should have talked more," Patrushev insisted.

15. (C) Patrushev reiterated GOR arguments that the West should not rearm Georgia. Saakashvili was "unpredictable," he said, reciting a story that German journalists had been taken to a house in the suburbs of Tbilisi, where Saakashvili was "not in his right mind, possibly on drugs," and accompanied by members of the security service and prostitutes. Still, the U.S. continued to provide funds and arms to Georgia.

16. (C) The Ambassador argued that the U.S. had not urged Saakashvili not to sign a NUF, and had warned him against using force in South Ossetia. Patrushev needed to remember that the NUF had been part of a package of measures, some of which Russia had refused to accept. He added that there had been repeated provocations by the South Ossetians against the ethnic Georgian population, and that Russia had not informed the U.S. prior to Russian troops moving into Georgian territory. The Ambassador emphasized that the U.S. had only provided humanitarian and economic assistance to Georgia following the conflict. Patrushev interjected "you're providing money; others are providing arms." The Ambassador urged Russia to work towards a successful meeting in Geneva on November 18 and to continue the process as long as necessary to ensure the important issues, such as return of refugees and increased international monitoring, were resolved.

North Caucasus

17. (C) In response to the Ambassador's concern that the level of violence in the north Caucasus seemed to be increasing, Patrushev countered that the level of violence had in fact dropped since the late 1990's. The situation in Chechnya had been "normalized," due to tightening of the borders, use of technical and operational border monitoring, and "personal attention" paid to the region, but Moscow was concerned by

the situation in Ingushetia and the other Republics. However, in 1999 there had been approximately 30 "representatives" of international terrorist groups in the area engaged in terrorist activity, receiving financing from abroad, and seeking to split the northern Caucasus from Russia. Today, Patrushev said, there were only three or four international terrorists in the region. The threat was not fully eliminated, but had been reduced.

18. (C) The level of crime was high, Patrushev said, because of social and economic backwardness, and thus more attention needed to be given to economic development. He denied that there was more nationalism: "nationalism without financing from abroad doesn't exist." Plus, there was little identification between the ethnic groups. In one valley in Dagestan, Patrushev said, there were 120 ethnic groups, many speaking different dialects. They needed to use Russian to communicate with each other. So, nationalism and separatism were unlikely. But, low social and economic conditions and lack of jobs led to crime. Once these problems were resolved, the situation would stabilize, Patrushev contended.

Threats from the South: Iran

19. (C) Patrushev acknowledged that Russia faced threats from across its southern border. Regarding Iran, he said Russia was prepared to cooperate with the U.S. in the UN Security Council and "go as far as you're ready to go." He reiterated that the degree of confidence between us should be higher and commented that when we keep each other informed, even if we do not like what is said, and take actions together, it was better. He emphasized that Russia was "ready to cooperate on all issues."

Comment

110. (C) Despite reports of chronic illness, Patrushev looked to be in good health and was sharp and focused throughout the

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hourlong meeting. A smaller, slighter man than photos and TV images led us to expect, he projects a highly controlled "Putinesque" persona, with occasional flashes of sardonic humor. The jury is still out whether the Kremlin is giving the Security Council more influence and stature, or if Patrushev was sent there because some thought he was becoming too powerful as head of the FSB and this was a way of controlling his influence. Not surprisingly, his comments on the U.S.-Russia relationship tended to reflect the mindset of an FSB officer rather than the broader worldview of a National Security Council chief; the Ambassador's effort to elicit Patrushev's shortlist of strategic challenges facing both Russia and the U.S. never got further than counterterrorism. Patrushev's repeated comments that the U.S. and Russia needed to restore greater trust and confidence did not prevent him from repeating many of the most scurrilous allegations about U.S. involvement in Georgia we have seen in the press.

BEYRLE